

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the above amendments and in light of the following remarks and discussion, is respectfully requested.

Applicants respectfully request entry of this response, as the response places the application in clear condition for allowance, or alternatively places the claims in better form for appeal. Specifically, Applicants have amended an independent claim to recite features of a dependent claim, which the Examiner has indicated is allowable.

Upon entry of this response, Claims 1 and 3-6 are pending; Claims 1 and 3-6 having been amended, and dependent Claim 2 having been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Applicants respectfully assert that support for the changes to the claims is self-evident from the originally filed disclosure, including the original claims, and that therefore no new matter has been added.¹

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1, 3, 5, and 6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,252,269 to Hara et al. Applicants respectfully assert that the rejection of the claims has been overcome for the following reasons.

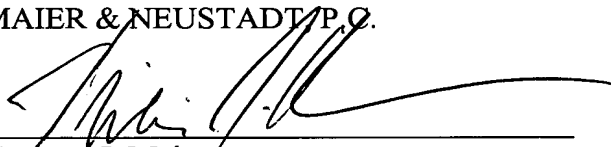
Applicants express thanks for the Examiner's indication that Claims 2 and 4 recite allowable subject matter, such that the claims although having been objected to would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. In response, Applicants have amended independent Claim 1 to recite features of Claim 2, and have canceled dependent Claim 2. Applicants have further amended each of remaining Claims 3-6 to depend only from independent Claim 1. Thus, in accordance with the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter, Applicants respectfully request the allowance of Claims 1 and 3-6.

¹ Applicants respectfully assert that support for the changes to independent Claim 1 are provide, in part, from previously presented dependent Claim 2, which is canceled without prejudice or disclaimer.

Consequently, in view of the foregoing discussion and present amendments, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. An early and favorable action is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT P.C.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Gregory J. Maier', is written over a horizontal line.

Gregory J. Maier
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 25,599

Customer Number
22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 06/04)

Philip J. Hoffmann
Registration No. 46,340

I:\ATTY\PH\22s\220173\220173US-AMENDMENT-10.25.04.DOC